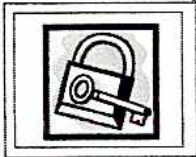


The Four Keys to Keeping Latino Students in School

National Dropout Prevention Conference
San Antonio, TX
October 24, 2006

Conexión

LEARNING
512.944.4958
mblack@conexionlearning.com
www.conexionlearning.com



The Four Keys to Keeping Latinos in School

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My Path...

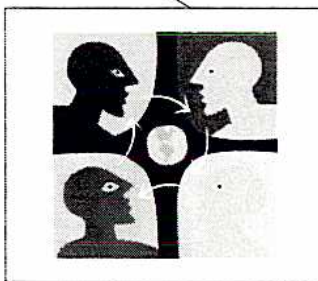


- Mary S. Black, Ed.D.
- Denton, Texas - Tokyo, Japan
- Texas school teacher
- Harvard University
- University of Texas
- Mother, wife, teacher, consultant, friend, student, partner, sister, aunt, mentor

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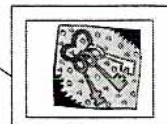


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Objectives



- To explore four key Latino concepts that help build personal relationships
- To consider what schools can do to leverage these four keys to keep Latino students in school

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Numerous Factors Relate to School Completion

- At-risk Behaviors
- Institutional Structures
- Academic skills

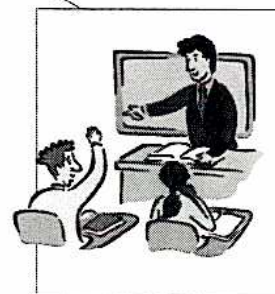


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Personal Relationship Factors



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Latino culture is especially sensitive to personal relationships.

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Relationships with teachers exert tremendous impact on whether kids like school or not. Productive relations with teachers make school worthwhile to Hispanic adolescents.

Valenzuela, 1999

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One student said:



"Mr. Smith does everything he can to make sure that we learn and that we're happy about learning too. Even when I'm sick I come to school to be in his class because he makes you feel nice, you know, like you're wanted or something."

Valenzuela, 1999

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Motivational Needs

--Alderfer's Hierarchy

Growth	Using capabilities in engaging problems. Greater sense of wholeness as human being.
Relatedness	Mutually sharing thoughts and feelings. Acceptance, confirmation, understanding.
Existence	Basic material and psychological needs.

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Four Keys that Unlock Doors to Relationship



Comunidad
Familia
Educación
Confianza

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The First Key

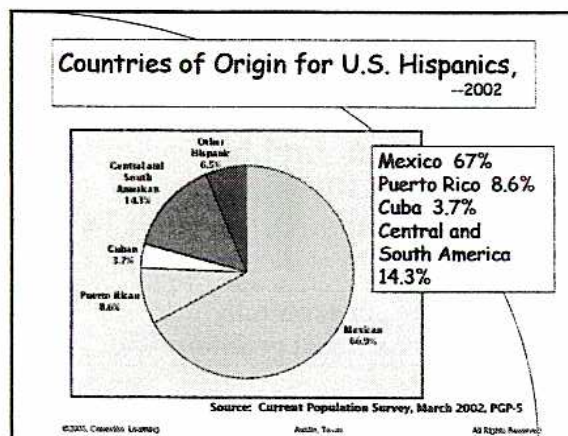
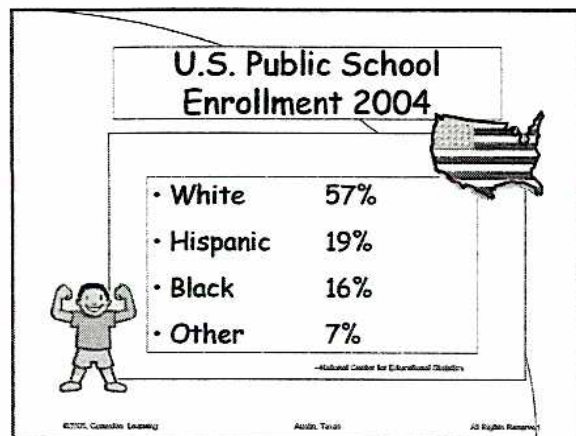


Comunidad: Understanding Latino Culture in the U.S.

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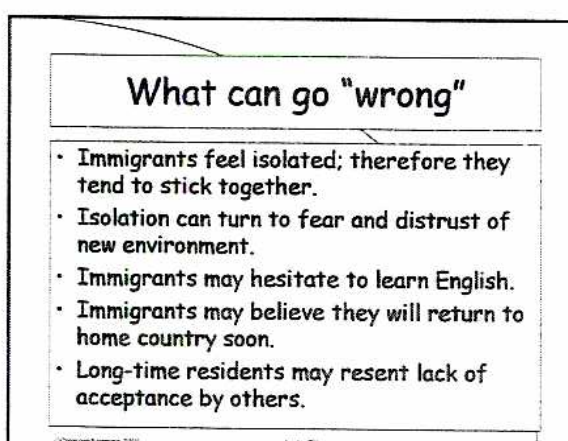
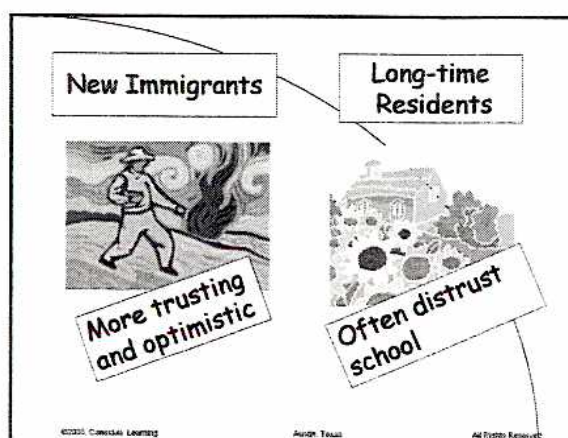
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Immigrant Characteristics

Immigrant	2nd Gen	3rd Gen	H and T
Foreign born, now living in U.S.	Born in U.S. of foreign born parents	Parents and child born in U.S. Foreign born grand-parents	Frequent migrations across borders
• Documents • No documents			

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What can schools do to build relationships that honor Comunidad?

What schools can do

- Create a feeling of belonging in every class by building relationships.
- Make all students feel valued.
- Teach citizenship at all levels.
- Incorporate learning about the neighborhood and family.
- Incorporate community service learning.

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The Second Key



Familia: Interdependence in Latino Families

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What Families Want



- Close families
- To be good people
- Respect from children
- Pleasure of children and family
- Grow old with children around them
- Regular employment
- Basic necessities

Valdes, 1996

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A Matter of Cultural Perspective

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence • Individual achievement • Child as an individual • Few cultures in the world | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collectivism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdependence • Group success • Child as part of the family • Most cultures in the world |
|---|--|

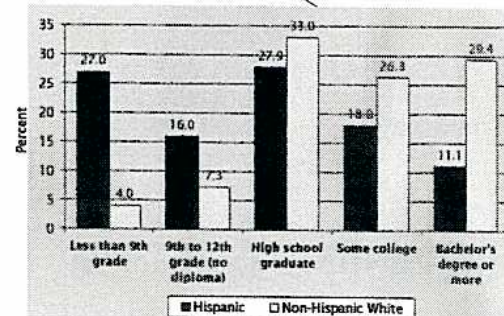
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Educational Attainment, 2002

(Population 25 years and over)



Source: Current Population Survey, March 2002, PGP-5

Strengths of Familia

- Feeling of belonging
- Close families
- Families take care of each other.
- Families want to be near each other.
- Elders expect care from children.
- Families seek help from each other.
- Cooperation learned at home.



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What can go "wrong"

- Families can expect older children to take on many responsibilities at home.
- Families can restrict children's friends and activities.
- Families may not look for, or accept, outside "help".
- Latino families can break down, like everybody else.

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What can schools do to leverage the interdependent spirit of Familia in school relationships?

What schools can do

- Realize that students may have outside responsibilities.
- Use lots of cooperative learning.
- Incorporate multi-age tutoring.
- Treat parents and families graciously at school all the time.
- Work with community colleges to increase local education opportunities.

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The Third Key



Educación: Understanding What Latinos Think about School

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Educación is...



- Respecting elders
- Demonstrating good behavior
- Learning how to get along with others
- Moral and social foundation necessary for academic learning

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School will teach children **ALL** behaviors necessary for success.

- How to get along with others
- How to respect teachers and classmates
- How to advance academically



- How to read, other skills
- Test-taking skills
- Homework skills
- How to get a good job and/or go to college

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Teachers as experts



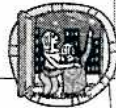
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Strengths of Educación

- Good behavior is expected.
- Authority is respected.
- Pro-social behavior is taught at home.
- Teachers are seen as experts.
- Schools are seen as knowing best about academic learning.



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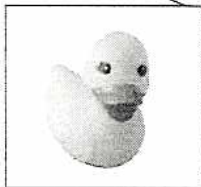
What can go "wrong"

- Families expect schools to teach ALL academic skills and content.
- Families may place more emphasis on behavior than academic learning.
- Families may not advocate strongly for students.
- Families may not believe it necessary to be "involved" in school.
- Educación can break down in the face of poor treatment and unhappy results.

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What can schools do to honor the value of Educación?


What schools can do

- Teach **ALL** academic skills and content necessary for success.
- Emphasize good behavior publicly.
- Always advocate for students and understand all sides.
- Teach pro-social behavior and character development.
- Respect students and families.


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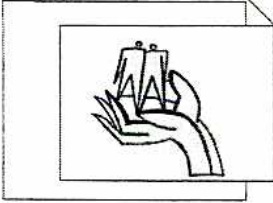
The Fourth Key



Confianza: Trusting the school to do what's right

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Teachers as caring and supportive



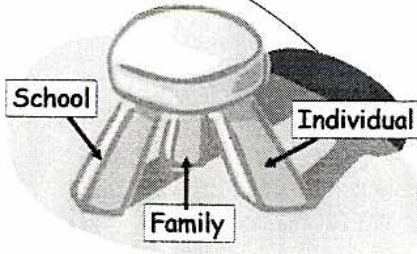
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Everyone is valued



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Confianza



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Strengths of Confianza

- New immigrant families trust schools to do what is right for their children.
- Immigrant students trust school to teach and guide them wisely.
- Trust between parents, school and students is a powerful force for student success.



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What can go "wrong"

- Broken promises and unfulfilled expectations can cause grave distrust of school in students and families.
- Once trust is broken, it is very hard to repair.
- Many schools have a negative legacy to overcome.

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Reluctant Parents



- May not see the benefit of school
- May not understand the system
- May have had bad experiences in American schools
- May distrust schools
- May think authorities do not like them/out to get them

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Disgruntled Students

Burned-out Teachers

- May distrust school
- May have hurtful past experiences
- May not understand the benefits of school
- May not feel welcome

- May not be aware of Latino cultural strengths
- May not want to change
- May not explain the benefits of school
- May not feel it's their job

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Few Hispanic high school students believe a high school diploma will make a difference in their lives or will "do anything" for them.

Romo and Falbo, 1996



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"Prepare me for life in the real world."
— HISD student

Mentor me when things get hard in school and in life.
— HISD student

"Tell me which jobs require high school graduation."
— HISD student

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What can schools do to promote *Confianza*, or trust?

What schools can do

- Make building trust with students and parents a top priority from preK-12.
- Train staff in social and cultural awareness.
- Hire empathetic personnel with excellent social skills—who also know their academic stuff!
- Train staff in career exploration.

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Respect is the
fundamental concept.



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Important Points

- Understand the power of personal relationships for Latino adolescents.
- Use the Four Keys to build relationships that matter with Latino students.
- Leverage Latino cultural strengths for academic achievement.

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Conexión LEARNING
Accelerating Latino Academic Success

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